

UVM Real Food Working Group Charter



Introduction and overview

The University of Vermont signed the Real Food Campus Commitment on March 22, 2012¹, thus committing UVM to the purchase of at least 20% “Real Food” by the year 2020. This Charter is adopted by the UVM Real Food Working Group (RFWG) and is designed to guide the implementation of the Real Food Campus Commitment at UVM.

UVM is committed to the advancement of our on-campus food system through the increased purchasing of local, humane, fair trade, and ecologically sound food products. This commitment is consistent with UVM’s Food Systems Initiative, which aims to support and expand food systems research, education, and outreach at UVM. UVM’s on-campus food system has the opportunity to be a model for what a healthy and sustainable food system can look like. As such, the activities of the Real Food Working Group directly contribute to research, education, and outreach opportunities for students and the broader UVM community.

This document covers the charge, composition, and activities of the Real Food Working Group, how the Real Food Calculator will be used, definitions of Real Food, and recommendations for procurement decisions. This document will inform the creation of a Real Food Multi-year Action Plan (which will outline plans for meeting our Real Food commitment) and a Real Food Decision Flowchart (which will inform specific procurement decisions).

This is a working document to be revised as necessary by the Real Food Working Group.

This Charter was adopted by the Real Food Working Group on November 6, 2014. This Charter is a living document and will be reviewed annually at the end of the spring semester and revised as necessary to reflect new processes and priorities. The most recent version of this document shall be made available on the UVM website at www.uvm.edu/realfood.

1. Mission and governance

Charge: The Real Food Working Group is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Real Food Campus Commitment. Specifically, the RFWG will:

- Advise UVM Dining on Real Food purchasing decisions;
- Develop a *RFWG Charter* and a *Multi-Year Action Plan* for the campus;
- Conduct outreach to increase student awareness and knowledge of the Real Food Challenge;
- Review annual Real Food Calculator assessments and produce an annual progress report;
- Promote cross-departmental and cross-division communication and collaboration;
- Make recommendations regarding partnerships between UVM Dining and the local community,

¹ See www.uvm.edu/realfood

- including local farmers, producers, and distributors;
- Meet annually (in the fall) with the Dining Services Advisory Committee regarding on-campus food infrastructure and meal plans as they relate to Real Food;
- Maintain relationship with national Real Food Challenge organization and Real Food stakeholders at other institutions through participation in working groups, events, and other points of contact;
- Conduct feasibility studies to further develop institutional Real Food initiatives, where necessary.

Composition: The Real Food Working Group (RFGW) shall include UVM students, faculty, staff, administration, and representatives from UVM Dining. A staff or faculty advisor will provide leadership and guidance to the student chair(s). To fill vacancies, potential RFGW members shall be identified and recruited every spring or on an as-needed basis. Any expansion of the RFGW must be approved by all members.

The composition of the RFGW shall include representation from the following stakeholder categories:

- Student Representatives (up to 9) comprising a mix of:
 - Students in food systems undergraduate and graduate academic programs
 - Other clubs with a mission consistent with the Real Food Challenge
 - Student members-at-large
 - Real Food Calculator interns (automatically granted membership for the duration of their internship)
- Administration/Staff (up to 3) with relevant responsibilities such as:
 - Sustainability
 - Food Systems
 - Dining contract management
- UVM Dining (up to 3) such as:
 - General Manager or designee
 - Staff member responsible for managing the Real Food Calculator
 - Executive Chef
- Faculty (up to 3)
 - Interested faculty with experience in food systems and/or food service

Member selection and participation: The staff advisor, dining services contact for the Real Food calculator, and calculator intern are granted voting membership in the working group as long as they hold their positions. Other individuals interested in becoming a member shall submit a simple application along with a statement explaining their interest in Real Food and the skills they would bring to the group. The RFGW may also invite individuals to join the group, bypassing the application process. Once selected to become a part of the RFGW, students are eligible to be members until graduation. Faculty, staff, and dining services members are eligible to serve for three years, after which point they may reapply to the group. Applications will be reviewed annually by the student chair, staff advisor, and 1 additional member of the group who is not up for election.

The Working Group encourages active participation and attendance at meetings from multiple participants across all stakeholder groups. While all are welcome to join meetings, official votes will be limited to the full voting members. If a full member is not present for a vote, they may designate an alternate to vote in their place.

Student leadership: Students are expected to be the driving force behind the RFWG, with crucial support from other stakeholders. One student will serve as chair for the group. Student input, in the form of student body polling and consultation with relevant student clubs, will be utilized through research methods classes. The student chair(s) will be elected annually at the last meeting of the academic year (likely in May) using the following process:

- students self-nominate or are nominated by another RFWG member
- all student nominees provide a short statement (written or verbal) on why they want to serve in the position
- RFWG members vote by written ballot using the voting procedure outlined below under “Voting Procedure”

The student chair is responsible for:

- managing the administration of the group, including
 - generating meeting agendas,
 - facilitating meetings, and
 - managing budget,
- liaising with the RFC national leadership,
- generally keeping a high-level view of RFWG work, and
- delegating responsibilities to other RFWG members.

Continued leadership in the student chair position is contingent upon adequate performance of the above duties.

Faculty or staff advisor: The faculty or staff advisor will be designated by the President and/or their designee, and approved by the RFWG annually (in the Spring).

The faculty or staff advisor is responsible for supporting the student leadership on their areas of responsibility (see above), including providing guidance related to the organization of monthly meetings, agenda preparation, meeting facilitation, campaign organization, travel logistics, budget management, and the management of ongoing RFWG projects. The faculty or staff advisor should be an active advocate on behalf of the RFWG with other campus entities, including UVM administration, UVM Dining, the Food Systems Initiative, and the Food Systems Internship program. In the absence of strong student leadership, the faculty or staff advisor should actively engage with current student members and/or seek new student members. The faculty or staff advisor shall participate in national Real Food Challenge working groups and events when possible to remain up to date with developments at the national level and at other Real Food Campus Commitment Signatory schools.

Continued appointment in the advisor position is contingent upon adequate performance of the above duties.

Activities: The RFWG will convene monthly to discuss ongoing projects. The RFWG Student Chairs will develop meeting agendas, facilitate meetings, and take and distribute meeting notes. Ad-hoc subcommittees meet and carry out work between official meetings. Subcommittees include, but are not limited to, policy, outreach, and calculator.

Purchasing Changes: In order to give the RFWG influence over the direction of Real Food changes at UVM, the RFWG will provide advisory recommendations to UVM Dining regarding any product changes that will affect UVM's Real Food percentage. It is our expectation that UVM Dining will bring any product changes that may affect UVM's Real Food percentages to the RFWG for discussion before making those changes. The RFWG will advise UVM Dining product changes in the following ways:

- The RFWG may recommend specific procurement changes
- The RFWG may request UVM Dining to provide options for changes in specific product categories

Procurement change recommendations from the RFWG to UVM Dining are advisory.

Voting Procedure:

A formal vote shall be held in the following cases:

- Election of student chair position
- All recommendations for product changes that are projected to change UVM's Real Food percentage by greater than .25% (in either direction)
- Whenever any member requests a vote to clarify whether there is majority support for a decision

The voting procedure shall be as follows:

- Only official RFWG members may vote. Anyone else present at the meeting shall abstain.
- At least 5 students and two representatives from each of the other stakeholder groups must be present to meet quorum. (If quorum is not met, an online poll will be used entirely or to collect the missing votes.)
- There will be one round of voting using written ballots.
- Ballots will be counted by one student member and one non-student member.
- The vote must pass with 2/3 (of votes) majority support.

Accountability: The RFWG will report directly to the UVM President. The President is ultimately responsible for ensuring that UVM meets the Real Food Campus Commitment of 20% Real Food by the year 2020, with the RFWG serving in an advisory role. Student representatives from the RFWG will present a report to the President, the Provost, the Vice Provost for Student Affairs, and the Director of the Food Systems Initiative in an annual meeting each spring.

Community Collaboration: The RFWG will obtain input from external experts serving in an advisory role through an annual meeting or invitations to attend our regular meetings, including, but not limited to, food service personnel, distributors, nonprofits, producers and/or farmers in its process.

Funding: It is our expectation that the RFWG may be funded through Student Life or Student Government Association, through special allocation by the office of the president or another administrative office, by a student-approved fee, or by a combination of the above and other relevant resources.

2. Real Food Calculator

Annual assessments of campus food purchasing will be undertaken using the Real Food Calculator. At this time, UVM Dining purchases are the focus of the calculator assessment. In the future, the assessment could include other campus food providers, for example Henderson's, CAT Pause, University Bookstore, and other Davis Center vendors.

Roles:

- Student Calculator Interns: Students will be primarily responsible for the completion of the Calculator assessment. This includes designing the scope and depth of the calculator assessment in dialogue with Real Food Challenge, and liaising with the Real Food Working Group, food service staff, and others. It includes outreach to vendors and distributors and, ultimately, the publishing of a final report with Real Food percentages and other data. Students may receive academic credit (through course, independent study, internship, or service learning) or an hourly wage for their work.
- Dining Sustainability Manager: UVM Dining will provide support for a Sustainability Manager to oversee the calculator process and provide training and support to the student calculator interns conducting the calculator assessment.
- Dining Director: Responsible for providing access to all necessary invoices, purchasing data, and vendor contact information.
- Real Food Working Group: Responsible for reviewing and publicly publishing results of the annual calculator assessment.

Scope of accounting: At this time, food purchases tracked in the Real Food Calculator shall be for food purchased by UVM Dining, though future accounting could take other on-campus food vendors into account.

Timeline: Calculator assessments will be performed for a representative month for each semester plus the summer. The representative months shall be October, February, and July.

Relationship with Real Food Challenge national campaign: Relevant staff and student researchers will utilize regular technical assistance and support from Real Food Challenge staff and organizers. This includes training sessions, connection to student researchers and dining directors at other colleges and universities, and a full review of assessment results before they are published.

3. Food, Procurement, & Supply Chain

Definitions:

- Real Food: “Real Food” will be used as a holistic term to describe products that are healthy as well as local, fair, ecologically sound, and/or humane. Local and fair refer to *who* produced the food, and ecologically sound and humane refer to *how* the food was produced (see Real Food Calculator Guide for more information).
- Real Food A vs. Real Food B: Those food items that can be verifiably identified as one of the four core Real Food criteria above is given a “Real Food B” designation (e.g. food that is grown by a local family farm but sprayed with pesticides or a processed food item from a non-local company that is certified organic – good but not the best option). “Real Food A” is defined by those food items that meet two or more of the Real Food criteria (e.g. coffee that is ecologically produced *and* fairly traded, or meat that that is humanely *and* locally raised/processed – this is the ideal).

Incremental Progress: The Real Food Working Group will develop and monitor incremental procurement targets to ensure success.

- An incremental goal of 1-2% more Real Food purchasing per year to ensure the achievement of long term purchasing targets.
- Interim benchmarks of 15% percent Real Food by 2015 and 18% percent Real Food by 2018.
- Real Food purchases are expected to eventually grow beyond 20% of the total food budget, with new goals to be set after 2020.

Purchasing Prioritization: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will use the Real Food Calculator Guide and work with distributors to identify Real Food A and B among its purchasing options, and will give preferential status to Real Food A or B products where they are price-competitive (as determined jointly by UVM Dining and the RFWG). The RFWG decision flowchart shall guide purchasing decisions.

Relationships and Purchasing Agreements: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will develop relationships with local producers and distributors. In some cases, UVM Dining may work to establish relationships that result in direct or indirect (through a distributor) purchasing agreements in which the price and quantity of the product that will be purchased are arranged with the local producer before the season starts.

Local Collaboration and Liaisons: The RFWG will make an effort to connect local producers and distributors with resources, including UVM Extension’s educators, and other Vermont agricultural professionals (of non-profit growers’ organizations or other organizations), to assist existing or interested growers with the tools they need to effectively meet institutional demand—including food safety, distribution, product aggregation, liability insurance, etc.

Seasonal Food Items: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will alter all menu cycles so as to feature local, seasonally available foods as a way to accustom cooks and eaters to cooking with the seasons.

Food Labeling: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will label all food items with nutritional information, an ingredients list, location of origin (farm/producer, town, state), and Real Food status (local, fair trade, humane, or sustainable), as feasible. Labeling should be at the site of the food's selection or sale. Labeling efforts may be conducted in partnership with Eco-Rep "Follow the Leaf" campaign, or similar efforts.

Variety: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will provide a range of culinary options, including vegan, vegetarian, and culturally diverse meals.

Cost-Savings Measures: It is our expectation that UVM and UVM Dining will identify and pursue creative cost-savings measures that support the shift from current products towards Real Food. Potential cost-saving measures may include, but are not limited to: (1) Eliminating non-seasonal ingredients (e.g. tomatoes in winter); (2) Reducing menu choice; (3) Designating one dining hall that predominately serves Real Food; (4) Switching from brand-name to generic brand items, whenever possible; (5) Reducing portion sizes or utilizing portion-control service techniques (especially with meat); and (6) Reducing food waste behind the line with LeanPath and customized offerings (e.g. hamburger not automatically served with bun) and on the customer's plate with continued education.

Infrastructure Needs: It is our expectation that UVM and UVM Dining will help develop and/or finance infrastructure identified as needed to facilitate the increased procurement of Real Food items. This may include both in-house changes (including new processing, cooking equipment) as well as supply chain improvements (new local meat processing facilities, new distribution systems) with local partners, for which the University may act as a collaborator and market guarantor.

Tracking Systems: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will adopt an internal labeling and tracking systems by working with distributors to determine the sources of all food purchases and their Real Food status, and that UVM Dining will, when possible, make up-to-date lists of farms and producers publicly available on the school's website.

4. Student and Community Involvement

Staffing: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will provide sufficient Dining Sustainability staffing to support Real Food initiatives internal to the food service operations (including finding appropriate vendors, helping with RFPs, staff training) as well as external activities (supporting student group activities, awareness-raising events, academic programming).

Education Materials: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will make available in its dining halls, and other points of sale, educational materials about Real Food and the school's Real Food commitment, including, but not limited to, food labeling (see above), table tents, pamphlets, and posters. Materials should feature UVM and/or Real Food Challenge branding. This will emphasize the fact that the UVM community is driving the changes.

Educational Programs: The RFWG will continue to collaborate with the Food Systems Initiative and other entities on campus that promote community education on food systems issues through mediums such as lecture series, panel discussions, workshops, and film screenings.

National Consortium: When available, it is our expectation that UVM will enter into and pay dues to an association of Real Food Campus Commitment signatories to provide support and recognition for the work of the Real Food Challenge national campaign and to promote the larger cause of local, fair, ecologically sound, and humane food.

Research: The RFWG will interface with undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, service learning classes, and internship programs to meet the research needs for our campus food system.

5. UVM Dining

Professional Development: It is our expectation that UVM Dining will provide opportunities approved by the RFWG Committee for paid professional development time for staff to deepen their knowledge of the Real Food Challenge. This will support greater on-campus awareness as dining services staff interact directly with students on a daily basis. Professional development activities could include, but are not limited to, workshops on food systems issues, cooking/preparation skills trainings, local farm visits, and forums on UVM's Real Food action plan.

Dining Services Contract Process: It is our expectation that compliance with the Real Food Campus Commitment will be integrated into future Request for Proposals and contracts to ensure that dining service contractors participate in the implementation of our Real Food Campus Commitment. It is our expectation that the RFP committee will seek input from the RFWG and that the RFWG will develop recommendations for the RFP committee and any resulting contract negotiation process. During this process, RFWG members employed by UVM Dining are expected to recuse themselves from RFP and contract discussions to avoid potential conflict of interest issues.

6. Campus Sustainability

The Real Food Campus Commitment is consistent with other sustainability initiatives at UVM, including those managed by the Office of Sustainability. UVM has signed onto the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) and will be reporting every three years on many indicators, including those related to food.

The RFWG will also connect with other campus planning processes that relate to food, including buildings and facilities updates, climate action goals, campus planning, and utility planning. This group should help identify major ways in which sustainable food initiatives can be integrated into these processes.